When Death Meets Its Master

Before we read from Scripture, it's worth pausing to consider what Christians have always openly professed. Since the earliest days of faith, believers have held firm that physical death is not the final chapter. They have consistently declared their belief in the resurrection of the body, and this confession remains just as meaningful in a moment of grief as it does at any other time.

When God created man and woman, He made them in His own image. Part of that means God gave us an eternal soul, one that can never die. Yet, we all carry within us a great enemy that we cannot defeat alone. That enemy is why we gather at times like this. Death is not a natural part of life, as some say. The God of the Bible created everything good, and He did not create man to die. Death is an unwelcome invader, a hostile enemy that entered through human rebellion rather than being part of God's good creation.

> **Romans 5:12** *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

Death was not part of the original design. And because we ourselves also sin, none of us can claim innocence before God. That is why we are here today, because this horrible enemy, which we will all one day face, has again taken someone we love. As painful as it is, we must hold on to the truth that death will not have the last word.

That brings us to the text from Luke's Gospel, chapter seven, verses eleven through seventeen. There we meet the only One who is greater than death, the One who has already defeated it: the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His sacrificial death for our sins and His resurrection from the grave, there is good news even when death comes again.

I want to think through this passage by turning it slowly, the way a jeweler turns a diamond in the light, letting each facet catch the light and reveal the stone's depth and beauty. What we find in this passage are three such facets: the providence of God, the compassion of Christ, and the power of almighty God.

I. Providence of God

When Jesus arrived at the gate of Nain, a funeral procession for a widow's only son was passing by at that very moment. Was that just a coincidence? I don't believe in luck or random chance. The God who revealed Himself in His Word controls everything. He knows all things. Nothing is hidden from Him.

> **Matthew 10:29,31** *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*
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> **Ephesians 1:11** *He works all things according to the counsel of his will.*
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> **Proverbs 19:21** *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*

I can honestly say at this point in my life that my own plans did not always turn out the way I expected. However, I also feel deep gratitude that God's plan for my life did come through, and it was far better than anything I had planned for myself. The truth for all of us is that God controls the moment and timing of our birth, and in the same way, He holds in His hands the moment and timing of our death. He is not cold or indifferent in His sovereignty. In His providence, He works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

II. Compassion

Along with the providential control God has over all things, we need to see in this same passage an aspect of great compassion. One detail worth noting is that Jesus did not wait to be asked for help. When He saw the grieving widow, He simply acted.

> **Luke 7:13** *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."*

Jesus is not some distant observer of our lives. As fully God and fully man, He understands pain, suffering, and the sting of death from the inside. We see this again in the Gospel of John, when Jesus arrived at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. When He saw Mary and Martha weeping, He did not stand apart from their sorrow. John tells us simply and

powerfully: *Jesus wept*. He was deeply moved in His spirit and was greatly troubled. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of compassion.

It is because of His love and compassion for sinful mankind that God took upon Himself a body just like ours and ultimately suffered and died on account of our sins. When we are troubled and heartbroken over losing a loved one, we must turn to Christ. He knows the pain and sorrow. He has been there Himself, and He invites us to come to Him for grace and help in our time of need. He sees our sorrow today as clearly as He saw the sorrow of that poor widow.

III. Power

We turn the diamond one more time and observe the power of almighty God. Luke tells us that Jesus touched the bier and spoke directly to the corpse: "*Young man, I say to you, arise.*" What happened next was instantaneous. The dead man sat up and started to speak, and Jesus returned him to his mother. That is power. Miraculous power. We see it throughout the Gospels in many of Christ's works, but here we specifically see the power Jesus has over death itself.

Do you remember Lazarus? Jesus stood before the sealed tomb and called out: *Lazarus, come out*. And the dead man walked out. When God speaks, there is no power on earth, and no power of evil, that can stop His will from being done. Our power ends at the grave, but His never does. It is the same power by which Jesus Himself was raised from the dead. It is the same power of the Holy Spirit that we need in our lives right now, His power to believe, His power to turn away from known sin, His power to be born again.

We have seen briefly the providence of God, who controls the span of every life. We have seen a glimpse of the compassion of Christ, who weeps with those who weep and who is never far from those who call on Him. And we have seen the eternal power of Jesus, the power to raise the dead and to give eternal life to all who believe.

> **Isaiah 40:28,29,31** *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength... but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.*

Before Grampy passed away, he made it clear to Jan that he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. We rejoice and thank God for that. One day, his body and ours will be raised from the grave. The only question remaining is whether we will be with Christ for eternity or separated from Him and all that is good forever.

There will come a day when there will be no death, no more tears, no more pain. The Apostle John, writing of the new heavens and the new earth, puts it this way:

> **Revelation 21:3,4** *Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, let that great truth bring comfort to your heart today. And if you are not yet a believer, do not tell yourself that you still have time. You cannot even believe without the power of God working in your heart. Seek Him now, while He may be found.

Jesus offered these words of comfort to His friend Martha as she grieved over her brother's death, and I close with them now, trusting that they will bring the same comfort to each one of us here. We grieve today in losing someone we greatly loved, but the wonderful truth is that death is not the end. God gave us a soul that can never die.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25,26